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THERE'S NO POINT HAVING DIALOGUE WITH ARAUJO

The following interview of George Junus Aditjondro was published in the weekly magazine, Sinar, on 19 November 1994:

Q: What is your opinion of the President's willingness to enter into dialogue with East Timorese anti-integrationists?

A: This is a positive development following Foreign Minister Ali Alatas' meeting with the East Timorese leaders. I don't like to refer to them as anti-integration leaders. I prefer to describe them as leaders of the East Timor movement. It is much better for us to give them a positive designation rather than calling them anti-integration. The integration that was favoured by Apodeti has never happened in East Timor. Integration according to whom? There's a big difference between what Indonesia wants and what the East Timorese want. The East Timorese clearly don't want such a huge concentration of troops there.

Q: Do you regard the term anti-integration as objectionable?
A: Well, there's never been any integration, so what is there be 'anti' about? I prefer to talk about the East Timor movement. It's like the Non-Bloc Movement. That doesn't consist of individuals, it's a movement.

The East Timor movement has its leaders. I think it's a great mistake to regard Abilio Araujo as a representative of the East Timor movement. He was expelled from Fretilin because he engaged in secret diplomacy with Ali Alatas without the approval of his party.

It's quite wrong to see Abilio Araujo as a leader who should meet the President. I think the only person the President should meet is Xanana Gusmão. The three representatives who met Foreign Minister Alatas in New York (the CNRM which was represented by Jose Ramos-Horta, the UDT which was represented by Joao Carrascalao and Fretilin which was represented by Jose Luis Guterres) all said that they were only representatives and not the top leadership of what they referred to as the resistance movement.

Q: So, what do you mean?
A: There's already been a meeting with Jose Ramos-Horta in New York and the meeting between Lopes da Cruz and the Portuguese Foreign Minister in Luxembourg. Now Abilio Araujo is going to meet the President in Jakarta. This is only evading the core issue, namely, that we have to acknowledge that a number of East Timorese want to be free. We can only know how many by holding a referendum. Indonesia should not behave like Morocco which has persistently boycotted a referendum in the Western Sahara.

Q: So, what do you think should happen?
A: Indonesia should get back to its own Constitution. I always stand by the Preamble of the Constitution: 'Independence is the right of all peoples and therefore, colonialism should be eradicated from the earth.' The challenge for Indonesia is to put the spirit of the Constitution into practice here in our part of the world.

When people were dealing with independence in Namibia, we gave our support. We supported the anti-apartheid movement by helping Nelson Mandela. But on the other hand, we have given Xanana Gusmão the 'Nelson Mandela treatment' by throwing him into jail.

These are double standards. We were born out of the independence struggle and we should not crush the desire of others to be free even though they are only a small nation.

Q: So what should happen now?
A: I think a good beginning has been made. Alatas has met Ramos-Horta and his colleagues in New York and Lopes da Cruz has said that the President wants to meet the leaders of the East Timor movement. I would like to call on the President to follow the example of de Clerk in South Africa by freeing Xanana Gusmão who is recognised internationally as the leader of the East Timor movement.

Just see: the European Parliament has given him an award that's something like the Nobel Peace Prize. The UN Association in Australia have given him their Human Rights Award. It was a magnanimous gesture on the part of de Clerk to free Nelson Mandela and then, after contesting the elections, to enter into a government that is lead by Nelson Mandela.

Q: So?
A: This means that we should start holding talks with the East Timor movement. We should also start discussing the technicalities of the surrender of sovereignty. When the Netherlands withdrew from Indonesia, this was preceded by a process of negotiation.

These negotiations could be mediated by someone with authority in East Timor like Bishop Belo. But don't talk to an adventurer like Abilio Araujo as if he represents East Timor. This will only belittle the standing of the East Timorese.

Q: But it isn't possible any more to grant them freedom...
A: Freedom is not something that is granted; it's something that has to be fought for. A referendum is the way to do it, as is recognised internationally.

Did people in Afghanistan ever think that the Russians would withdraw? Did people ever imagine that the Americans would withdraw from South Korea? The longer we hold out there, the more unpopular we become not only with the East Timorese but also internationally.

Q: But the version up to now has been that they want to stay with us.
A: If that assumption is right, we shouldn't be afraid to hold a referendum. If it's true that the East Timorese want to stay with Indonesia, the Indonesian government shouldn't be afraid of a referendum.

Q: Would that resolve the question?
A: After the way we have treated the East Timorese during the past twenty years, I see the process of annexing East Timor as having been far more traumatic than in the case of Irian Jaya.

For instance, from the start, we did not recognise the economic structures in East Timor. Anyone with escudos, the Portuguese currency, found that their money became worthless. This didn't happen in Irian Jaya. The Dutch guilder was convertible into rupiahs so that people didn't feel cheated.

In Irian Jaya, we recognised the system of education that had been pioneered by the missionaries and also the Dutch government. That

didn't happen in East Timor. Irian was not forced to become part of Indonesia by our sending thirty battalions. Take a look at the autobiographies of Benny Murdani, Soesilo Sudarman and Yoga Sugama. They all explain how the troops were used.

Q: Just suppose there were to be a referendum and the majority were to opt for staying with Indonesia - say, 60:40. Would the 40 percent want to recognise the result?
A: That's a hypothetical question. I doubt whether 60 per cent would want to stay with Indonesia. They already know so much about Indonesia. For instance, would it be more efficient for them to use all the oil from the Timor Gap to develop East Timor or, if they were part of Indonesia, to have part of the proceeds deposited with the centre and then have to ask for a share? It would be far better for the East Timorese to use their resources to develop their country. And people from West Timor would be able to find jobs there.

If East Timor were to become independent and prosperous, this would have a positive influence on its neighbours. And the money would result in great abundance and prosperity.

Q: Are you saying that a referendum will not solve the question?
A: A referendum is the first step towards solving the question. But before we get to that first step, there must be the willingness to enter into dialogue, a willingness to hold negotiations between the Indonesian government and the top leadership of the East Timor movement.